SHAYKH ÁBDU'L ĤAQQ DIHLAWĪ IN MADĀRIJ[250]

The Truth about a Rumour: We had mentioned in passing that a group of emigrants to Abyssinia returned to Makkah, upon receiving news that the disbelievers of Quraysh had made peace with the Prophet ﷺ.

The details of this rumour are like this:[251]

One day the Prophet ﷺ, while inviting the pagans of Makkah to Islām, was reciting Sūrah al-Najm. When he reached the following verse:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰٓ ﴿٢٠﴾

Do you not see Lāt and Úzzā; and Manāt, the third other.[252]

Satan interfered and made the following words to reach the ears of the polytheists of Makkah:

They are the lofty idols; and their intercession is hoped

After completing the sūrah, the Prophet ﷺ prostrated. Muslims in attendance prostrated and polytheists also prostrated. There was not a single disbeliever in Masjid al-Ĥarām who did not prostrate. Except one – according to the famous narration – Umayyah ibn Khalaf al-Jumaĥī, who picked up a handful of dust and wiped it on his forehead and said: "This much is sufficient."

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[250] *Madārij al-Nubuwwah*, 2/65; magnum opus of Imām Muĥaddith Ábdu'l Ĥaqq Bukhārī Dihlawī [d. 1095 AH], the finest and most authoritative work of Prophetic biography in the Persian language. The above is based on the Urdu translation of the same by Muftī Ghulām Muýīnuddīn al-Naýīmī [d.1391 AH / 1971].

[251] The shaykh has cited the rumour here; his analysis and refutation follows.

[252] Sūrah al-Najm 53:19-20.

After this, the idolators were very happy and said: "Muĥammad [ﷺ] has mentioned our idols, praised them and affirmed their intercession. So now onwards, we too shall respect him and accept him. [They further said:] Of course, we too do not consider [these idols as] creators, givers of sustenance, or givers of life and death. When Muĥammad [ﷺ] agrees with us, we too shall make peace with him and we will stop persecuting and tormenting his followers." This news reached everywhere in the region and the Devil helped spread it. When this news reached the refugees [from Makkah] in Abyssinia, they returned to Makkah. This event caused immense distress and pain to the Prophet ﷺ, and to comfort him and give him solace, Allāh táālā revealed the following verse:

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ
فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ

> And We have not sent before you, from a Messenger, or a Prophet, except that when he recited, the Devil sneaked something alongside [the Prophet's] recitation. So Allāh will efface that which shayţān has slipped in between – and [Allāh will] clarify His verses. And Allāh is the Knower, the Wise.[253]

When this verse reached the disbelievers, they said: "Muĥammad ﷺ spoke well of our gods and praised them; he is now regretful and [disavowing what he said] – therefore, we too shall withdraw our truce".

[***End of the Myth of Storks as it is retold***]

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[253] Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52.

Scholars of Islām have questioned the authenticity of this story.

Qāđī Íyāđ analysed this in his *Al-Shifā*, and declared that [the narrations via which this story is told] are weak [and therefore, unreliable].

Imām Rāzī in his tafsīr has proscribed it as an utter lie, fabricated by renegades. It is said that it was one among the libels of Ibn al-Zabárī.

The Prophet ﷺ, whose blessed tongue is the Exponent of Truth, the Quintissence of Veracity, about whom Allāh táālā has said: ***"He doth not speak of his own desire; indeed, [everything he saith] is not, but revelation [waĥy], inspired,"***[254]– how can it be possible that praise of idols could issue from his tongue? It is also impossible for the Prophet ﷺ to add something in the Qur'ān – deliberately, or mistakenly – that which is not a part of the Qur'ān. Especially adding something that blatantly contradicts the core message of the Unity of God [*tawĥīd*], brought by the Prophet ﷺ himself!

According to Bayhaqī, this strange and bizzare story is not established by any reliable report – and the narrators of the reports which mention it are disreputable and of questionable integrity.

Bukhārī has mentioned a ĥadīth in his *ŞaĥīĤ,* that the noble Prophet ﷺ recited Sūrah al-Najm and at its close, he prostrated. All the Muslims and polytheists, the jinn and men present prostrated. This much is narrated via authentic routes and trustworthy narrators – but none of them has mentioned this *Myth of the Storks*. Without any doubt, anyone who alleges that the Prophet ﷺ had 'respected' idols [at any time in his life]

[254] Sūrah al-Najm, 53:2-3.

becomes a kāfir. Therefore, we know by narrated evidence[255] and rational proof, that the story is apocryphal and a patent falsehood. This is the opinion of majority of scholars and ĥadīth masters.

However, some scholars like Abū Ĥātim,[256] Ţabarī,[257] Ibn al-Mundhir,[258] Ibn Is'ĥāq,[259] Mūsā ibn Úqbah,[260] and Abū Maáshar,[261] and some others, have reported this story via weak and unreliable narrators and in reports which are interrupted [*munqaţiý*], with skipped narrators [*mursal*], muddled [*muđtarib*] or inauthentic [due to other reasons].

Irrespective of the quality of these reports, it appears that there is some basis for the story and therefore, it is necessary to find plausible explanations and valid interpretations for these narrations so that the distasteful implications are warded off – but some exegetes strayed into alleys far from the road of satisfactory explanation and plausible interpretation.

For example, they said: These words were issued from his blessed tongue [we seek Allāh's refuge] in a state of sleepiness, and he did not realise what he was saying. And when he came to know about it, then Allāh táālā clarified [that the words were not part of revelation]. This is reported by Ţabarī via Qatādah.

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[255] Via reliable and trustworthy narrators.

[256] Ĥāfiż Ábdu'l Raĥmān ibn Muĥammad ibn Idrīs al-Rāzī ibn Abī Ĥātim [d.327 AH] famous exegete and ĥadīth imām.

[257] Ĥāfiż Abū Bakr Muĥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mundhir Al-Nīsābūrī [d. 318 AH].

[258] Muĥammad ibn al-Ĥasan al-Ţabarī, Abū Jaáfar [d. 323 AH].

[259] Muĥammad ibn Is'ĥāq ibn Yasār al-Madanī [80-151 AH].

[260] Abū Muĥammad Mūsā ibn Úqbah ibn Abī Ayyash [d. 141 AH].

[261] Abū Maáshar Najīĥ ibn Ábdu'l Raĥmān al-Sindi al-Madanī [d. 170 AH].

Qāđī Íyāđ rejected this flatly and refuted this 'explanation' and he said that it is absolutely impossible for him to be overpowered by Satan in any state – whether in wakefulness or in sleep.

Some proffer farfetched explanations and say that the Prophet ﷺ was forced by Satan and he uttered these words in a state of confusion [al-íyādhu billāh] – and these words issued from him involuntarily. This one is worse than the first, downright vicious, and totally unacceptable because Allāh táālā has said:

إِنَّ عِبَادِى لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ

Indeed upon my slaves – you do not have any power.[262]

Satan has no power over the slaves of Allāh. And if Satan indeed had such power, he could compel people to do things, and none of us would have the power to do any good deed.[263]

Another explanation put forward, is that the idolators of Makkah would describe their false gods in this manner, and the Prophet ﷺ was used to hearing this and it had lingered in his subconscious and it slipped out of his blessed tongue inadvertently [*al-íyādhu billāh*]. Qāđī Íyāđ has rejected this as well [as the Qur'ānic verse repudiates such a possibility].

Another explanation is that: When the Prophet ﷺ reached the verse: "***And Manāt, the third other,***" the polytheists present panicked and thought that the Prophet ﷺ would denounce their idols and deplore them, so they rushed to add these words along with the recitation of the

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[262] Sūrah al-Ĥijr, 15:42 and Sūrah al-Isrā'a, 17:65.

[263] That is, Satan cannot compel humans to do a bad deed; however, he instigates them, seduces and incites them and convinces their *nafs* to obey him and follow him.

Prophet ﷺ, as it was their habit to cause disturbance during the recitation of the Qur'ān. This was attributed to the Devil because it was by *his* incitement that the polytheists did this act – or it can be said that these polytheists were devils among men [*shayāṭīn al-ins*].

Another rationalisation [*ta'wīl*] is that the Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān slowly and with pauses between verses. Satan was waiting for the opportune moment to add his evil bit. When the Prophet ﷺ paused after the verse, Satan began to recite in a voice and tone similar to that of the Prophet ﷺ and those sitting close to him mistook these words as the Prophet's ﷺ own utterance and then spread this erroneous notion.

The author of *Al-Mawāhib*[264] said that it is an excellent explanation. Qāđī Ibn al-Árabī,[265] a towering Mālikī savant, also considers this as a commendable explanation and said that Allāh táālā has informed that it has happened before with Prophets and Messengers, that on occasions, the Devil has interfered and added his own words in the middle of their speech. This verse [i.e of Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52] clearly explains that it was the Devil who added these words in between the speech of the Prophet ﷺ and the words were not uttered by the Prophet's ﷺ blessed tongue.

If one objects: These rationalisations are necessary only if the story is well-established as truth; if the story is totally fake and apocryphal, what then would be the meaning of the verse 22:52 – "***And We have not sent a Prophet or a Messenger before you..***"?

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[264] Imām Aĥmad ibn Muĥammad al-Qasṭallānī [d. 923 AH].

[265] Imām Abū Bakr Muĥammad ibn Ábdullāh ibn al-Árabī [d. 543 AH].

What does '***prompting of the Devil***' mean? And what is the meaning of "***abrogation and affirmation of abrogating verses***?

The answer is: If the story is deemed to be true, then the meaning of the word ***tamannā*** should be 'recitation' based on the word ***umniyyah***, and one of its meaning is 'reading'.

But if the story is deemed apocryphal and baseless, then ***tamannā*** takes the other meaning of 'wishing for' or the instigation of one's lower-self [*nafs*] towards desire and inclination towards the mundane world [*dunyā*] and getting entangled in it; or the temptation deep within oneself - which has to be amended. Such human tendencies are permissible for Prophets as long as they are not continuous or persistent.[266]

The Prophet ﷺ has himself said: "Indeed there is a clouding upon my heart and I seek Allāh's forgiveness for it"[267]

Sometimes, ***tamanna*** means: the Prophet's desire for his people to accept the truth and faith; his desire for more people to become Muslims. Or the desire for something that draws people closer to faith – and because the

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[266] The verse says: ***idhā tamannā***; going by the second explanation, it means: 'when they wished for something' – ***alqa'sh shayṭānu,*** the Devil tried to instigate and try to inveigle them – ***fa yansakhu'llāhu mā yulqish'shayṭānu***, Allāh ta'álā will efface those thoughts and redirect them – ***thumma yuḥkimullāhu aāyatihi***, and then Allāh will instill the right thing in their hearts and guide them. See the full translation according to this approach at the end of this citation.

[267] *Muslim*, §2702; *Abū Dāwūd*, §1515. Qāđī Íyāđ has said: These are moments when his blessed heart was distracted from the remembrance of Allāh – because he was always preoccupied with the *dhikr*/remembrance of Allāh. He ﷺ sought forgiveness for that. It is also said that it is his concern for his *ummah* [followers] because he was shown their deeds and he was worried for them and therefore sought forgiveness.

Satan incites [*ilqā*] people against it, his [Prophet's] heart is overcome with grief [for his people]. Since Prophets are immune from sin – and from the instigation of the devil – and due to their honour and high esteem near Allāh, they are kept away from what the Devil seeks to add; Allāh táālā shows His Prophets the signs which will keep them steadfast in ther mission and focussed on the Hereafter. This is what: "***and Allāh will establish his signs***" means. There is infinite Wisdom in this which no one except Allāh táālā knows. This is the summary of Bayđāwī's explanation of this verse. In the end of his explanation of the verse, Bayđāwī says: 'herein is proof, that it is possible for Prophets to forget and be subject to confusing thoughts'. Allāh táālā knows best.

End of Citation from Madārij.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The verse according to Shaykh Ábdu'l Ĥaqq's explanation means thus:

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ
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> And We have not sent before you, among a Messenger, or a Prophet, except that when he wished, the Devil prompted alongside [the Prophet's] wish. Then Allāh will efface that which shayţān tried to incite – and Allāh will instill His signs. And Allāh is the Knower, the Wise.[268]

[268] Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52.